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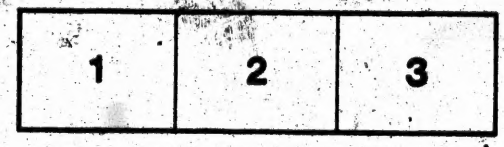

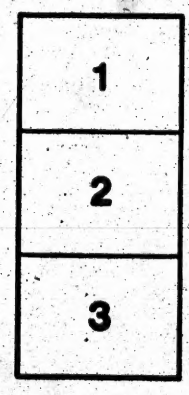

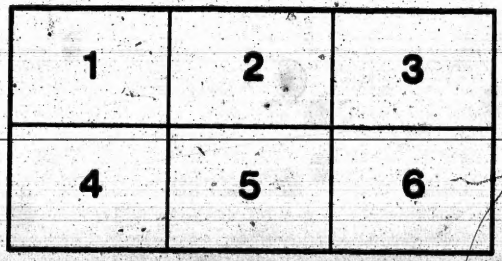

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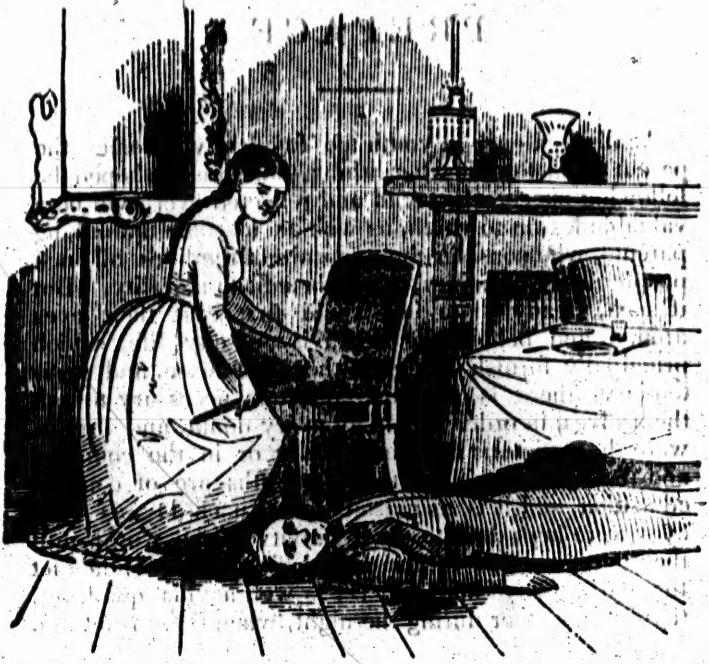
THE ROAD OBSTRUCTED AND THE TRAVELLERS MURDERED—See pp. 12, 13.

LIFE AND CONFESSION
OF
SOPHIA HAMILTON,
WHO WAS
TRIED, CONVICTED, AND SENTENCED TO BE HUNG,



AT FREDERICKTON, ON THE 8th DAY OF APRIL, 1845,
FOR THE
PERPETRATION OF THE MOST SHOCKING MURDERS AND DARING ROBBERIES PERHAPS RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF CRIME.

CAREFULLY SELECTED BY THE AUTHOR,
WILLIAM H. JACKSON.

FREDERICKTON, N. B.

1845.

THE ROAD OBSTRUCTED AND THE TRAVELLERS MURDERED—See pp. 12, 13.

PREFACE.

As disobedience in youth too frequently becomes the parent of misfortune when adults, therefore it is hoped the following pages, when read and reflected over, will be a valuable lesson to youth, as well as to some unthinking parents, who consider the exposure of the lives of such people rather an injury, than a benefit to morality. But if such, if any there be, would first cast their eyes around, and behold the depravity of city life, which principally furnish the gaol, the alms-house, and penitentiary, there is only one question necessary to ask themselves, in order to satisfy every doubt, and that is, were those victims born in the city or in the country? and the answer will be that four-fifths are of country education, and it is as reasonable as noon-day, as their eyes were kept dark to the depravity of the world until they got entangled in its unmerciful grasp. Hence let the mariner have his compass as well as his quadrant, that he may steer during the night, when there is no sun.

Entered according to the act of Assembly, in the year of our Lord 1845, by W. H. JACKSON, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of the District of Fredericton, N. B.

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LIFE AND CONFESSIONS

OF

SOPHIA HAMILTON.

It has probably never fallen to the lot of man to record a list of more cruel, heart-rending, atrocious, cold-blooded murders and daring robberies than have been perpetrated by the subjects of this narrative, and that too in the midst of a highly civilized and Christian community; deeds too, which, for the depravity of every human feeling, seem scarcely to have found a parallel in the annals of crime. And it seems doubly shocking and atrocious when we find them perpetrated by one of the female sex, which sex has always and in all countries been esteemed as having a higher regard for virtue, and far greater aversion to acts of barbarity, even in the most vitiated, than is generally found in men of the same class. We may truly say that the annals of history have never unfolded to the world a greater instance of human depravity and utter disregard of every virtuous feeling which should inhabit the human breast, than the one it becomes our painful duty to lay before our readers in the account of Sophia Hamilton, the subject of this very interesting narrative. We deem it not unimportant to give a brief account of her parentage, in order that our numerous readers may see the source from which she sprung; as also the inestimable and intrinsic value of a moral education in youth, which is a gem of imperishable value, the loss of which many have had to deplore, when perhaps too late. The public may depend on the authenticity of the facts here related, as it is from no less a source than a schoolmate of her ill-fated father. The author has spared no exertions to collect every minute and important particular relating to her extraordinary, though unfortunate career.

Richard Jones, the father of the principal subject of this narrative, was the only son of a wealthy nobleman residing in Bristol, England; he had in the early part of his life received a classical education. But in consequence of the death of his mother, he of course got an uncontrolled career, which continued too long, until at length he became a disgust to his kind and loving father, whose admonitions he disregarded and whose precepts he trampled upon. At the age of twenty-four he was a perfect sot, regardless of the kind counsel of his relatives; and at length his character became so disreputable, that he was accused of almost every outrage perpetrated in in the neighborhood in which he belonged. This preyed so much upon his aged father, that he became ill, and it is thought by many it shortened his life. Richard had then attained the age of twenty-five, and seemed so afflicted by the death of his father, that he promised amendment of conduct, so that his uncle took him as partner in the Druggist business; but this was to no effect, for in a short time he sought every species of vice and wickedness, which the depravity of human nature could suggest. His uncle and he dissolved, and as he had considerable of the money that his father bequeathed to him, he soon found company to suit his purpose, and became enamored of a woman of low character, who succeeded in making a union with him, and after spending considerable of the money, and seeing the funds likely to be exhausted, immediately scraped up their effects, as she possessed a little property of her own. They then resolved, like many others, to emigrate, finding that they could not live in their native country.

They embarked in a ship bound for St. John, N. B., in the year 1811; remained a short time in the city, when they moved up the St. John river and settled down between Fredericton and Woodstock, where he learned the farming business, and in the course of a little time accumulated means, which enabled him to keep a country store; and as the neighborhood in which he lived was a new settlement, property beg in to rise, and he commenced speculating in public land. As he had a good education and bright intellect, he was soon looked upon as a leading man in the neighborhood, and

it was thought profitable, as well as necessary, to establish a tavern in the vicinity, which was strongly recommended by many lumber merchants; and Jones, being considered the best adapted for the business, accepted the offer. He at this time was of course prosperous, as he had the whole monopoly and an unbounded concourse of travellers stopping at his house; but an avaricious desire seized him, and he at once became fearless, and his first step was to commence smuggling between Fredericton and Calais, Me., which business he carried on for a considerable length of time unmolested. While things were going on in this style, it so happened that an old acquaintance, whose name was Thomas Murdock, moved from St. John, and settled in the same neighborhood in which Jones resided. The acquaintance was soon renewed, though not much to the satisfaction of Jones, as he knew Murdock to be a man of honesty, and it was on this ground, and the fear of detection and exposure that Jones dreaded his old acquaintance, for Murdock was yet entirely ignorant of the business Jones was engaged in, for he, Jones, had previously managed to keep up the appearance of honesty and respectability.

As Murdock visited frequently at the house of Jones, he soon began to suspect that all was not right. However, he said nothing on the subject, until one evening he happened to pass the house of Jones, on his way home at an unusually late hour, and seeing a great stir, he determined to go in and satisfy his doubts as to what he before suspected; and there he found Jones secreting a quantity of broadcloth which had been stolen a few nights previous. Jones then finding that he was at length discovered, begged of Murdock not to expose him, and at the same time offered him fifty pounds, as he said exposure would be the means of bringing his family to disgrace, and final destruction; and at the same time endeavoring to induce Murdock to participate in the capture; but Murdock flatly refused, saying that his duty to his God and his country forbade such an undertaking.

He then begged of Murdock to allow him a little time to settle up his affairs and leave the country, promising in the most solemn manner, and calling upon his God to witness, that if he would grant this request he would be-

come an honest man. And Murdock, seeing that it would be the utter ruin of Jones's whole family, for his children were then but young, consented, after the most solemn assurance that Jones would reform. But we will now see the value of a promise from such a debauchee as he was. Immediately he collected his consorts around and held a consultation as to what should be done. Meanwhile, they indulged in the use of the inebriate's cup, which was a necessary ingredient to fit them for their hellish purpose; and at length, after consultation, agreed that it would be necessary to murder Murdock. They then separated, resolved upon the death of the unoffending and innocent victim.

It was agreed that they four in number, should meet the following night at a school-house in the neighborhood of Murdock's house, which was about three miles from the tavern, which they did; but two of them being so much intoxicated that the others felt doubtful of success, they finally separated,—but resolved to execute the deed the following evening, which they did, assisted by Jones. On approaching the house where Murdock resided, unconscious of the cruel conspiracy which he was soon doomed to experience from the hand of one who had often shared of his kind benevolence, Jones stationed two at the back door, while he and one more demanded entrance at the front door. Murdock on hearing the voice outside, said, "Is that Jones?" who immediately answered with a coarse voice, "Yes, let me in." Murdock fell alongside of his wife, exclaiming, "they have come to murder me! farewell, my dear and affectionate wife;" and at the moment Jones rushed in as Murdock's wife moved out of the bed, and drove a large knife through Murdock, when the poor afflicted wife screamed aloud, and Jones, missing his way through the house, was confused for some time, and was, perhaps a little intoxicated. Just at that time the Quebec mail stage came along, and hearing the cries of Mrs. Murdock, the driver with six others repaired to the house, where they found Murdock stretched in a bloody gore, and Jones torn limb from limb by a large Scotch dog. On hearing the cries, the others fled, but one of them, whose name we cannot learn, was taken subsequently and hanged in Frederick-

ton, we believe in the year 1822. Thus even means are always left whereby the guilty are sooner or later brought to condign punishment. Thus ended the career of a disobedient son, and a cruel and regardless father, and blood-thirsty, cruel man, whose ear was deaf to the cries of the widow and the tears of the bereaved orphans which he left, both of his own and the ill-fated Murdock, who left six helpless children to weep over the loss of their kind father. After the death of Jones, his wife carried on the business for some time, but in consequence of the death of her husband, which was generally understood in that section of the country,—(though many of her friends deny that it was he who was found in the house of Murdock, as he was so much deformed by the dog, and boldly assert that he went to England to see his relatives; but it was pretty generally acknowledged by those best acquainted in the neighborhood)—the public forsook the house, and Mrs. Jones was obliged to sell out and leave the neighborhood, which she did, and moved to the St. Lawrence River, where she settled about thirty miles from Montreal. As her means of living begin to grow rather scanty, she began also to see the urgent necessity of bringing all her artfulness into practice, for she was a very persevering, arbitrary woman. As she had a very heavy family to support, she endeavored to make her house a house of resort for travellers or persons who wished to spend some of the hot summer months in that cool and delightful region of the country, away from the more unwholesome air of a crowded and suffocated city; and in this manner, as may be expected, they formed many new and stylish aquaintances, so that she soon succeeded in marrying her daughters to persons of respectability, although they were anything but virtuous girls as well as wives.

The youngest daughter, whose name was Sophia, and who is the principle subject of this narrative, was at the age of seventeen, married to a young man whose name was Hamilton, a respectable mechanic, who happened to be travelling in that section of the country, we believe a native of Kingston, Upper Canada. As he chanced to put up at her mother's house in the summer of 1828, and as his health was rather delicate, he determined to

stop some time, as his physician recommended a change of climate. However, her mother finding Mr. Hamilton to possess considerable money and considerable personal attraction, at once endeavored to bring round a marriage between him and her daughter. Consequently he was treated with the greatest care and attention during his illness, Sophia being his constant and only attendant. She possessed an uncommonly agreeable looking countenance, although rather masculine; she was very fascinating, and seemed to possess a soft, tender, agreeable disposition; at the same time her mother was exercising all her art and influence to induce him. He was not wholly unaware of the real disposition of the daughter, had he only listened to the voice of warning; but to no effect, for he resolved to marry Sophia immediately on his recovery.

The following year he returned to Kingston, taking with him his wife, and settled down about ten miles from the city, and there set up a tavern, which was agreeable to his wife, as her mother taught her the art of subtle deception.

He had not been long married, as may be supposed, until he found out the real character of his wife, which preyed so much upon his constitution, that his health began to decline rapidly, and at the end of two years he died, leaving a widow about nineteen years old. His death was not so much grief to her as was supposed by those who dealt out sympathy towards her, as the tender-hearted but deceived people thought, she being so far distant from her relatives, if she had any alive, for none were ever seen visiting her since they moved there. But it has since been ascertained, by her own confession, that he died from the effects of poison which she gave him, through the negro girl, whom she kept as cook, taking care, lest suspicion might occur after his death and an examination take place, that it might appear a mistake or through the ignorance of the illiterate negro. This she did, thinking, no doubt, that if she was clear of him, as his health seemed declining, she could then carry out any plan she might devise for the gratification of her propensities; for she was very sensual in her pleasures and totally incapable of appreciating that high-toned feeling, and the self-respect and refinement which should govern the female sex. She was almost indifferent to

any principle of justice, as well as human sufferings; she was bold, revengeful and courageous, and cunning in the subjects of her pursuits; she was also very deceitful, shrewd, and had a great influence over weaker minds. After the death of her husband, she became one of the most abandoned and notorious of women, giving loose to every species of licentiousness and extravagance—and there was no crime too great, no deed too cruel for her to engage in, to accomplish any object of her desire, often engaging personally in acts of the most outrageous and daring robberies.

After living in this manner for three years after the death of her husband, her previous course of life being secreted from public censure, in the spring of 1834 she removed from her old place of habitation to Woodstock, in the province of New Brunswick, where she set up a cottage tavern, as she knew she would here have a much better chance of carrying out her wicked and unlawful practices. Here she made use of a great many artifices to induce emigrants and smugglers to put up with her; and she was considered by many a very kind, open-hearted and generous woman. After giving very liberal contributions to charitable institutions, and seldom charging her visitors anything, in the course of one year her house was the principle resort in the village—so that it was necessary to employ a pretty smart bar-keeper, or one who would be capable of superintending the general business; therefore, she hired a young man, whose name was Brown, a native of Maine, who seemed to be very capable as well as admired, until at length he left—but of him we will speak in another page. At this time business seemed to be very prosperous, so that it was nothing remarkable for young men of every rank, station and age to visit her house; besides, she being a young and fascinating widow, having the sole responsibility of a large and prosperous looking establishment, it was no small inducement to young men who admired an enterprising partner. However she managed matters as to make her house a kind of head-quarters for quality travelling by steamboat in summer season—at the same time looking out for such as had the appearance of plenty of money. She soon got around her a gang of ruffians who were perfectly obedient to her will, and ready to execute

the most bloody act, whenever she planned or commanded; of this gang she was always the principal deviser. Whenever travellers, or such as she had good reason to suspect had plenty of money, stopped, she immediately marked her object, and frequently became the leader herself in some of the most horrible and outrageous murders.

About the middle of November, 1835, a gentleman whose name was Parker, from Quebec, on his way to Boston stopped at her house, as he had to wait for the steamboat, which was broke down. Finding that he had a large quantity of specie with him, she placed her unsuspecting guest at a table, so that his back was near an open window, which served as a passage or door leading out to the roof of the back part of the house, through which he was shot by one of her consorts, whose name we could not learn. They then robbed him of every thing he had about him. We are informed he had with him £2000; they then secreted his body in the cellar until night, when he was buried in a swamp, in rear of the dwelling; his horse they afterwards sold for $150, in Eastport. Soon after the navigation of the river closed, and the cruel and lawless gang spent the winter, having plenty of money to carry on their gambling; but some of them were compelled to clear out for assassination and other drunken outrages.

In about three months after, two gentlemen from Quebec, on their way to Fredericktion, happened to stop at her house. The travelling being very bad, in consequence of a heavy snow drift, which made it impassable, either for wheeling or sleighing, they resolved to put up for the day. After calling for dinner and making some inquiry about the price and quality of furs in New York, and Boston Markets, which at once indicated their business, and in all probability cost them their lives, they engaged in conversation, and wiled away the time in exciting and gratifying their feelings by the wit and fascinating conversation of their polished, shrewd, and deceitful hostess; and as the evening began to draw nigh, the brandy decanter became quite a sociable companion, and was used pretty freely. One of them being rather limited in his use of the cup, she resolved that he should not escape her hands, and immediately called for a bottle of champagne, (and was understood by the waiter,)

which left him perfectly stupid; thus she kept them until about eight o'clock, when they called for their horses, and while they were making ready to start, Brown and two others started about four miles ahead, laying obstructions in the way, by making fast a rope across the road, about three feet high, in order to capsize the horses as they passed down the hill, which proved effectual, while they lay in ambush and rushed upon them, shot one and stabbed the other—the affrighted horses broke the harness and run away, but were brought back. The bodies they brought to the tavern, and also buried according to Brown's confession, while in prison at Halifax, awaiting the day of execution, from which we find a detail of this almost unprecedented outrage. Sophia was herself present a few minutes after the murder was committed, and was of course employed in searching and dividing the spoil, of which no doubt she claimed a pretty good share. We are informed that they had in their possession £2000.

The abovenamed Brown, who was in the capacity of bar keeper, left the place subsequently, and was committed to prison on a charge of murder last November, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he was tried, condemned, and received sentence to die on the 7th of April, 1846. And when brought upon the scaffold, declared, as he stood upon the brink of eternity, and in the last moments of his earthly existence, expecting in a few moments to meet his God in judgment, that he was perfectly innocent of the crime for which he was about to die—but still acknowledged being guilty of other murders of the blackest shade. He then begged a little time, as he wished to acknowledge to the world some of the crimes of which he was guilty. He then proceed as follows:

"I was born near Calias, in the year 1815, of moral, honest and industrious parents, who were kind, tender, and loving towards me, their only and unworthy son. Instead of adding comfort to their venerable years, I brought grief and sorrow to their hearts, and disgrace to their heads. I lived with my father until I was seventeen years old, when I left his house, in consequence of my father's contrary disposition, which I thought I had much reason to complain of; but alas! to my sorrow, I since became sensible of my error, but too late, both for

their comfort and my happiness. Hearing so much of the enterprise of a city life, I determined to try it. I despised my father's counsel, and strolled about from place to place, associating myself with idle and dissipated company, and soon became one of the most idle and dissolute wretches in existence. In this manner I roved about, and finally went to New York, from there to Albany—not finding employment, I started for Montreal, but did not stop until I went to Woodstock, and finally agreed to serve as bar-keeper for Sophia Hamilton; and in November, 1835, I was accessory to the murder of Parker, from Quebec, on his way to Boston, and in about three months after, I was the principal leader of the gang who laid an obstruction across the road, when we killed and robbed the two travellers. I then had plenty of money, and I so much feared the arm of detection, that I returned to New York, joined a gang of low, dissipated, gambling fellows, joined in companionship, and agreed to share equally in whatever we should make. We robbed a man on the Harlæm road of $400—he made a desperate resistance. I drew a large knife, which I generally carried with me, and stabbed him, when he fell, exclaiming, 'I am murdered!' Seeing the murder a few days afterwards in the papers, and the Mayor offering $1000, I feared my companion in the crime might be induced to turn State's evidence. I then determined to leave for New Orleans, or some other Southern city. I immediately embarked for New Orleans—having plenty of money, I resolved to appear the gentleman. I soon became acquainted with a pretty lady, of an excellent education, whose father was a rich and respectable merchant of that city. She received my addresses very cordially for some time, but soon began to suspect that I was not what I pretended, and grew daily more cold and reserved in my presence. I then tried to persuade her to elope with me, but she at once refused, saying that she would never marry contrary to the will of her parents. Finding that I could not induce her to accede to my plans, I then determined on her ruin. About this time I received tidings of the death of my only sister, father and mother; and seeing that I was now deprived of all my relatives, as also of my father's farm, I became, if possible more reckless in my mind. I

then persuaded her to accompany me in a ride for pleasure, and conducted her to a house of ill repute, called for a room, and desired not to be disturbed. I then locked and bolted the door. Perceiving this, she inquired why I did so. I then told her what my intentions were, promising her at the same time, that if she would consent to marry me, before returning to her father's house, I would desist. This she flatly refused, saying at the same time, that she would rather die than permit herself to be led to the altar by me, after taking such a dishonorable course. She then attempted to escape, but finding that I prevented her, she began to cry out for help, which so enraged me, that I caught up a towel which was hanging in the room, and tried to force it into her mouth. She resisted with all her might. I then twisted it around her neck, choking her until she was insensible. I then accomplished my hellish purpose, and knowing that if she should recover, she would immediately expose me, I therefore resolved upon her death, which I consummated by tying a pocket handkerchief around her neck so tight as to prevent the possibility of her breathing. I then left her, and, making my way unperceived, fled from the city. After that, my disposition became, if possible, more reckless. I cared little what I did. I reproached myself with all the bitterness of anguish, and my very soul was tormented for years, as though I felt the wrath of God and the torments of hell. I would this moment, if I had that choice, suffer twenty mortal deaths, such as she did, than again enter into the like feelings which I have since suffered—but I am about to be released. But if you who hear me could but conceive the slightest idea of the sufferings my poor heart felt, you would, no doubt, look on me with pity and not with scorn; but I hope my death will be an example to those who survive me, for I am satisfied to leave this world; and I deserve the fate that awaits me."

Brown then faltered back, faintish and silent, and in a few moments received the just sentence of the law. The ill-fated, innocent and defenceless victim to his [illegible]vage and cruel feelings, whose name was Sera Milton, was murdered on the 22d day of June, 1830, as was ascertained by Brown's previous confession, while in prison awaiting the day of execution, and from her dear

and loving parents, whom he caused to mourn and sigh in bitter anguish for the loss of their affectionate daughter.

Sophia Hamilton's cruelty at this time had reached to a mature age, for she was enveloped in innocent blood; and it seemed almost impossible that such crimes could be committed by one of such tender looks, and affectionate feelings as she seemed to possess; for even at the bar she gained the sympathy of almost every spectator, and the judge, when passing sentence, looked deeply affected; but of that we will speak in its proper place.

Five years passed quite smoothly, or at least without any known incident of cruelty. She moved from her old stand to the suburbs of Fredericktou, about sixty miles distant from Woodstock, her previous habitation, and there commenced business anew, but in a more stylish and fashionable house than the one she before occupied. Her house, as before, was soon the resort of smugglers between Fredericktou and Calais, Me., so that she had again a wide field to exercise her atrocious and fiendlike designs. In the month of April, 1811, a gentleman named Lucas, a native of Portland, Me., called at her house, and put up for the night, as he was on his way up the river, where he had connection with a saw mill. She ascertained that he had considerable money with him; for she still made a practice of inquiring the business and circumstances of travellers, in order to find the object of her desire. While he was at breakfast, she came behind him and plunged a large knife through his back; he fell, screaming for some moments, and then expired. Two of her consorts, who had been sent for, came in; but she, fearing that they would not come in season, had attempted and completed her object alone.

They robbed him of $800, and carried his body to the wharf and threw it overboard, attaching a large stone to it to prevent it from rising. He was, I believe, a kind, charitable, and good-hearted man, revered and respected by all who knew him.

While things were going on in this style without interruption, during the course of the ensuing year, about the middle of July, 1842, a merchant from Charleston, South Carolina, on his way to Quebec, stopped at her house; she found that he had money, as she had discoursed with him on the slave trade, and finding that he

himself was engaged in the traffic of slaves, she immediately resolved that he should never sell any more. She then put him to sleep in a room separate from the main part of the house, and with two of her associates entered the room by a secret passage, which they had fixed for such purposes, and one of them cut his throat from ear to ear, while the others held him in the bed; they then robbed him of $4000, together with a valuable gold watch worth $120. The body was afterwards buried in the cellar, where his remains were deposited without a monument to record that he once existed. Soon after this, she cruelly murdered a boy, twelve years of age, whom she had in the house in the capacity of waiter or servant, because he accidentally saw them secreting the body of the murdered man, and had said, when he was one day angry, that he would inform of them; but she resolved, like the pirates, that the dead should tell no tales; she ordered him down to the cellar to regulate something, and followed him, with a large knife; while he was stooping, she stabbed him to the heart! She then dragged him over and threw his lifeless body among the skeletons.

This inhuman and cruel murder of the unoffending and faithful domestic, is the only instance of her disinterested cruelty, since the murder of her husband and child; for we find, that the love of money seemed to be the sole object of her desire, if that could be any apology for her outrageous crimes. But the more she seemed to get, the more her thirst increased, regardless of the price which it was to cost, and by indulgence arrived to mature age; so that in place of being an ornament to her honored sex, she became a scourge to her fellow creatures, as we find by the confession of her associates in guilt, as well as from her own confession.

About the middle of June, 1844, she murdered an Irishman, who was in the smuggling business for some time previous, and who was in the habit of putting up at her house, it being convenient to the steamboat wharf; but of his death we have no other account, than that which we collect from her confession, which will be seen in the following pages. However, report says that

he was quite a respectable man, who for many years resided in the city of Quebec, and left a kind, affectionate and loving wife and six orphan children, to sigh and lament after him. The amount of property which it is said he had with him when he left Quebec is variously stated, but we are satisfied that it was considerable.

About six weeks afterwards, two male emigrants came along and put up at her house, we believe natives of Yorkshire, England, and during the course of the evening, she joined in with them in quite a sociable conversation, about the old country, as they were well acquainted with that section which was once dear to her ill-fated father, by which she acquired such information as she required; of which a full account will be found in her confession, as it is the principal authority for those two occurences.

Reader, how great must be the patience of the Almighty, who watches over us, and desireth not the death of the sinner. But, alas! what is human nature when astray from the path of virtue? How easy to corrupt, how hard to reclaim. But it sometimes pleases divine providence to suffer the cruelty and wickedness of the indulged passion, until there is no remedy within its own limits, so that its fall may be more observable, as in the case of this family, whose history would fill a volume. But as our limits will only afford a glance, we hope it will be a lesson to those who have to discharge the duty of parents, as well as to those who owe a duty to parents, that they may earn that blessing, by obedience, which is pleasing to God, that they may expect the same in return.

It was about this time that she heard of the death of her mother, who had been confined to her room for several years before her death [illegible], the sudden and untimely death of her brother, of [illegible] had not heard for many years, whose name was [illegible]. He was shot at Kingston, U.C., for horse-stealing. He had continued his riotous and dissipated life, after the marriage of Sophia, and finally joined a gang of horse thieves and counterfeiters, which infested the country round about the Lakes. This gang had a regular communication established through from Toronto to Detroit, and from Kingston across through the States to New York. On one occasion Jones

was returning after leaving a number of horses thus stolen, and for which he received a considerable sum of money for his service[illegible] passing the officers' quarters, he entered his stable, but was observed by one of the veterans on the look-out, who gave the alarm to the guard. [illegible] Jones, on hearing the alarm given, mounted the horse, and started off at full speed, with the guard in full pursuit, and although they were on foot, they knew the road better than he did, for he killed the horse, which he rode against a gate, and he was shot by the enraged men. His body was taken to the hospital, and there deposited, but could not be identified, nor could they obtain any intelligence that would lead to a discovery of his name, and it was only about a year since, that it was discovered that Isaac Jones was the name of the man who was shot. Thus ended the unhappy career of father and son, and we shall soon see the unhappy termination of the life of the youngest daughter. What a melancholy contemplation for the reader, when it appears that, like their cruel father, they knew no fear, but were of a perverse and cruel disposition, and seemed to set no value on the lives of their fellow beings; and strange, though true, that those who purchase property at such a sacrifice, seldom know how to take care of it, and however much they may have, seem to thirst for more.

After the news of the death of her brother, Sophia became, if possible, more barbarous and cruel than before. She now seemed to take no delight whatever in any thing but acts of the most blood-thirsty and inhuman nature. Nothing now seemed to satisfy her murderous disposition but the death of some innocent, and to her, unoffending victim. But her career was nearly run. She had carried it to such a height that it was impossible to continue in this way much longer, without being overtaken by justice. And it was not long after this that she was, by the following circumstance, exposed, and her gang was broken up, and some of them brought to condign punishment for the high-handed and outrageous crimes they had for a long time committed, and thus far without detection.

She had a new gang of associates, who were not quite

so expert as those on former occasions. They murdered a Quaker, by the name of Morse, who was travelling in that part of the country, in Nov. 1844, who put up at her house, as he intended to import some American goods, and it was necessary that he should stop at Fredericton, until the merchandise passed through the custom-house. During his stay in that village, he of course formed considerable many acquaintances, and said to a friend, with whom he had some intercourse, that he would stop at the widow's that night and probably board there, which he did, for he was seen there three days after. After the lapse of two weeks, a package came, in care of Mr. Johnson, for Mr. Morse; another week elapsed, and Mr. Johnson thought it strange that he did not call. As he was riding past, he inquired for Mr. Morse; Sophia told him that no such gentleman stopped there; he then inquired when he left, and she said she never knew a gentleman of that name to put up with her. Mr. Johnson went home quite dissatisfied, and, on opening the package, he found, among other things a letter from his wife, in which she expressed considerable dissatisfaction at his stopping so long. It seems that Morse had written to his wife informing her that he intended to be absent for some time. Her letter went on thus:—"My dear husband, I am sorry that you cannot either finish your business or leave it in the hands of some trustworthy person, as it must be disagreeable to you to board at a tavern; but as the owner of the house is a widow, I suppose it bears more similarity to a private boarding house. I hope your health is good, but I am dreadfully annoyed in my sleep about you." These things looked very strange and suspicious. And in a few days a flame of suspicion spread all around the neighborhood, until some persons came into Mr. Johnson's store who said they had talked with Mr. Morse in the tavern two days after he went there to board; while others had remarked the idle, sauntering fellows that were seen continually hovering around the tavern, having no likely business, and many other circumstances were alluded to, until suspicion became so strong in the minds of the people, that they resolved to make a private search, but not until Mr. Johnson, accompanied by some others, went again to make

inquiry, but the answer was the same as before. She seemed much confused, which strengthened their suspicions. Accordingly they went the following afternoon and visited Sophia's house, making some pretence for the visit; one of them said he was about to build himself a new house, and asked her to give him permission to examine her house, that he might measure and take the dimensions of it, as he liked the plan on which it was constructed. Not suspecting any thing, she granted the privilege, though taking care to lock the cellar. They then made such examination as they were able, but discovered nothing above. However, to satisfy their suspicions, they determined to see the cellar, but found it bolted fast, and on their return up a back stairway into the kitchen, they questioned an old domestic as to what was kept in the cellar. She shook her head and said she dare not tell. They then promised to give her a handsome reward if she would only tell them, but her mistress coming in at the moment, prevented any further conversation. The next morning they proceeded to the house, accompanied by the Sheriff and constable, and Sophia and two of her consorts, Wilson and Rogers, were taken after a desperate resistance. They were kept in custody until the cellar was search, where the body of Morse was found, amongst skeletons and other emaciated remains. The prisoners were carried to Montreal prison on the following day, (10th of December,) to await the sitting of the Queen's Bench, which sat on the 17th of January. In the interim Wilson turned Queen's evidence and discovered the whole mystery of the murder of Morse, and declared that Rogers was innocent of the murder, for none but himself and Sophia were guilty of perpetrating the horrid deed. And Rogers was immediately released, as the Grand Jury ignored the bills against him.

We deem it quite unnecessary to attempt to give even an outline of her trial, for as we have already said more than we calculated to, when we commenced writing. Suffice it to say, that her trial and sentence was the most solemn scene perhaps ever witnessed in that city, or any other city on the broad American continent. She seem-

ed stern and quite unmoved throughout the entire time of her trial, which occupied three days, and seemed quite composed; while her able counsel, to whom great praise is due for the extraordinary ability which he exhibited while addressing the Jury, which occupied over two hours, seemed quite affected. After the Judge's charge to the Jury, which followed, they retired and remained out about an hour, when they returned with a verdict of "Guilty of Murder in the first degree." She received sentence on the 22d of January, to die by the law the 5th of February, during which time she remained silent, until three days previous to her final destination, when she received a quantity of poison, which she took to avoid the public exposure of a shameful death. But it may be asked, how she got the poison, or by whom was it carried into the prison cell; that remains as yet unknown; but, according to the opinion of many of the most respectable persons of the country in which she resided, during her cruel and blood-stained career, she had many associates in guilt who have not as yet been discovered; but whom I hope will before long, find their way to condign punishment, as it is utterly impossible that she, or her known associates, could possibly continue such a course of life so long, without recourse to others for assistance. But while numberless conjectures are afloat with regard to this one and that one being associated with her, and partakers of the benefits of her robberies, I consider that it is my duty to speak very careful lest I should be instrumental in tarnishing the personal character of individuals on the authority of mere report, as a little time will no doubt satisfy justice by discovering the guilty. There was one circumstance connected with her detection, which, I venture to state, gave reason for suspicion, and which may not be amiss to remark. Subsequent to her imprisonment, quite a number of individuals retired from business. Some, who were extensively engaged in the grocery business, others, who were equally as extensive as wine merchants, stopped suddenly, or left their business in the hands of others, and immediately disappeared, and no one knew where they went, or could give the slightest intimation of their busi-

ness abroad, as it is considerably different in a village, from that of a city life, as each wishes to know the business of his neighbor, and, in fact, does to a considerable extent. But no one knew the cause of their sudden and unexpected disappearing, whilst others remarked the velocity of the wheels of fortune which accompanied some of their neighbors from poverty to opulence and wealth in the space of a few years, &c.; together with many other circumstantial opinions which I am compelled to omit. But it may be interesting to the reader to state one more circumstance, to which I was eye witness, and which seemed very strange to me. She remained silent as before mentioned, and in consequence of the rumor and excitement which prevailed, I was induced to go to see her, in order to speak to her on some important matters connected with her previous course of life. Consequently, on Sunday, the 2d instant, I went, and when I reached the prison, the jailor told me that he could not possibly admit me that day, it being Sunday. However I remained in the city until morning, when I went again, accompanied by the sheriff. And I was no little astonished on hearing the jailor say, That he hoped that he would not be so much annoyed in future as during the last week, by persons wishing to see her, as there were more applications to visit her, than all the other prisoners together. However the massive iron door was unbolted and swung open, and we proceeded along the dark hall, whilst every tread of my foot, as it sounded in my caused a sensation easier imagined than described; and at length we reached a range of cells, and immediately the turnkey as he is generally called, unbolted it, and told me to walk in. And as I found myself inside a prison cell for the first time in my life, I stumbled, for it was either to dark to see, or else my sight became dim on approaching the scene of horror which stood erect before me; and before I could recover, I was accosted by her strong stern voice, as she said, "Is that you, Mr. Jackson—do you want to speak with me." I answered in the affirmative. She then said, "Sit down." But the place was so small that I could hardly turn around. "Do you think there is any hopes of my reprieve, or

shall I have to suffer an ignominious death on the scaffold? If so, I shall be a corpse before to-morrow noon, for I don't want to live any longer. So you may go, for I am as one already dead." Not one word could I get her to speak more, and I retired with a heart overpowered with sorrow. As I walked out of the dreadful tomb of the living, the door was again bolted, which sounded like the mournful death-bell. How many solemn reflections rushed into my mind at that dreadful moment, but not one would could I utter for some minutes; when the sheriff seeing my confused countenance, remarked something lively to me, and I soon regained my strength, but could not, during that entire day, cast off the mantle of horror with which I was clothed. I assure you, gentle reader, were you to behold that solemn scene as I did, that your heart would melt into pity for the misfortune of a child of humanity, however wicked she might have been.

But to return to my subject. The sheriff remarked there was a difference in her countenance since he last saw her; and, as the time of her destination was fast approaching, it was thought advisable to send a minister of the gospel to render some consolation, and accordingly she was asked by the jailer in what profession she would like to die. She answered, that she prefered to die in that to which she nominally belonged, which was the Wesleyan, and application was immediately made to a minister of that denomination, who attended as early as possible, but too late, for she had privately taken a quantity of poison. After the poison began to operate, she raved like a maniac, tearing the clothes from her body, and attempting to lay hold of and bite every thing within her reach, cursing God, and the hour that gave her birth. After these fits had a little subsided, and reason had again returned, the pangs of a guilty conscience, and remorse, with all its frightful horrors and bitter anguish, would seize her soul, and she would cry out in the bitterness of her torments, that she already felt the flames of hell! reproaching herself in the most bitter anguish for the awful crimes she had committed. Then she would again rave like a maniac, cursing and

swearing in a most horrible manner, and attempting to destroy every thing within her reach. So strong was she in those fits of raving, that it was with difficulty that three men were able to tie her on her bed. She appeared to be in great agony and pain until she died. About three hours before her death she was visited by a minister of the Methodist Church, to which she nominally belonged. He endeavored to console and reconcile her, by telling her that there was yet hope, if she would only repent and acknowledge the crimes which she had committed. She got a little consoled, and confessed the following, as near as we could learn, from the minister's confused memory, who was much afflicted on beholding her awful appearance.

CONFESSION OF SOPHIA HAMILTON.

I was born in the year 1811, convenient to Woodstock, in the province of New Brunswick. My parents emigrated from England a short time previous to my birth, and I am happy to say that my mother is dead, so that she won't feel the mortification of hearing or knowing of my untimely and ill-fated end, for she was, in early life, doomed to drink deep of the galling cup of bitter sorrow. She was questioned by the minister, as to what she had reference to. She replied, I mean my ill-fated father, who lost his life when I was about eight years old, in attempting to take that of another, whose name was Murdock. My father killed Murdock, and was himself immediately devoured by a large dog which belonged to the house of Murdock. Soon after my father's death, my poor mother, (with a large family, and the sole charge and responsibili-

ty of a large establishment, and not being acquainted with public life, together with the disgraceful stigma of my father's death, I was compelled to sell out, and leave that section of the country, which she did in 1823, two years after my father's death. She then moved, taking with her the whole family to Quebec, stopped there, and finding it difficult to maintain a large family, she then moved up the St. Lawrence river, and settled down about eighteen miles from Montreal, where I lived with her until I became eighteen years old, when I was married to Mr. Hamilton, in the year 1830. About ten months after my marriage, I moved with my husband to his native place, which was about ten miles from Kingston, U. C., where I, during the first year, enjoyed the happiest portion of my natural life. But I soon began to discern a dark shade in his countenance, caused by jealousy, as if to signify that he was sorry that he ever beheld me. My mortification on beholding that, and listening to the taunting and sneering of his relatives, with which I was situated, was great. My solitary and melancholy contemplations were much easier imagined than described, being all alone, without one trustworthy friend to console my wounded feelings. Therefore I was left all alone to contemplate on my misfortune; during which time I would rather die, than live to be made the tool of contempt, as I was innocent of the guilt with which I was charged. But I bore it with fortitude, for my resolute and arbitrary temper was hard to subdue. Although spurned with contempt, and looked on as an inferior in rank, family and education, I at once resolved to teach them a lesson on the latter. (She then attempted to jump up, but was unable.) Soon after I found his health beginning to decline, in consequence of a pleuritic fever which seized him. I thought it was a good opportunity to put an end to my melancholy life; but alas! I was only dipping myself deeper in the pit of misery. I poisoned him when two years and eight months married to him, to free myself from the trials incident to a protracted illness. The poison I administered to him through my negro cook, and in three months after, I strangled to death my first offspring, which was the only child that nature ever furnished me with. O! that ever memorable year and day; to it I will seal my condemnation, for it has never left my memory either day or night. It has haunted me, and followed my footsteps through every moment of my unhappy life since. The cries of the innocent victim, I think just now——. (Here she got into a terrible rage of despair for some time, then, getting a little calm, proceeded):—Were I on the summit of Mount Ararat, and could utter language as loud as thunder, and could speak every tongue and language, and had around me all the nations of the earth, I would declare that I deserve the cruelest death of any being that ever existed, if I thought it would be the means

of preventing one single misguided and cruel wretch from a similar offence. Yes, I wish that my name, and the memory of my cruelty, may be for ever engraven on the memory of those who survive me, or hear of my cruel life and miserable death, that it may be a warning to those entering on the path of life, that they may suppress the human passion, and untie the strong holds of Satan, who was my daily companion through life. She was again interrupted by the good and meek parson, who tried to console her, by reminding her of the patience which holy Job exercised during his long affliction. She then became quite composed, and quite a consoling discourse was given by the minister, by telling her, that, as she soon expected to meet her eternal judge, he hoped that her repentance might be sincere; at the same time reminding her of the sorrow of Judas, who despaired of salvation, and was consequently lost for ever. He then referred to the repentance of the thief on the cross, for example, to show that there was hopes of salvation even at the eleventh hour, and cautiously warned her against the awful consequence of dying in despair of the salvation of that good and bountiful providence, who is ever willing to extend the arm of mercy to each and every one of us, however black and grievous-looking may be our sins. And here he quoted some texts of Scripture, which says, that He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that they live and be converted; and said, that he had every reason to hope that it pleased the Almighty to punish her in this world. She then seemed quite composed and easy, though weak. She went on to say, I would bear all the torture and affliction with pleasure. Here the humble and consoling servant of God, who felt pleasure in the dark recess of the prison cell, then referred to the cruel [illegible]ture and affliction which was endured by the primitive Christ[illegible] and the early saints, who suffered, though innocent; as also the patience of the innocent and harmless, who suffered in England during the Reformation. Here he referred to Lady Jane Gray, and the innocent Mary, Queen of Scots, who laid their heads on the block, to appease the wrath of that blood-stained and cruel people. She then proceeded as follows: After the death of my husband, I sold out my effects, and left that part of the country, and I lived with my mother, a short time, but my disposition being unsettled, I soon after moved from there to Woodstock, where I commenced keeping a tavern in the fall of 1835, and, in two months after, I assisted to kill a gentleman from Quebec, whose name was Parker. Richard, son of one of my consorts, shot him through a window as he sat at dinner. We robbed him of £2,000; his horse was also sold in Eastport. This was the first murder that I was guilty of after the death of my husband and child, which could never be erased from my memory, were I to live longer than I now desire. I was

the principal deviser of the cruel act before related, of obstructing the road, by which the two men from Montreal were killed, and I was on the ground a few minutes after, just as they were expiring. I assisted to search their pockets and wallets, where we found over $2,000 sovereigns in gold; the ill-fated Brown, who was executed at Halifax, was my principal assistant and perpetrator in the blackest deeds that ever disgraced a being. In 1840 I moved from my old stand to the suburbs of Fredericton, where I commenced business in April, 1841. With my own hands I killed a gentleman from Portland, Me., (who stopped at my house,) while he was at breakfast; I robbed him of $800. In the month of November following, I assisted to rob a gentleman from Charleston, S. C., who stopped at my house. I, with two others, entered the room whilst he was sleeping, and cut his throat from ear to ear. We found in his wallet $4,000 dollars in paper. Shortly after, I, with my own hands, killed a boy who was for some time in my house in the capacity of waiter, because he had threatened to discover of what he had previously seen. About six months before I was taken, I murdered a smuggler, who put up at my house frequently on his way to the States; I mixed a quantity of poison in the bread which I gave him; I then put him to sleep in a room separate from the main part of the house, so that if he should make any alarm during the night, it would be unheard, taking care to secure the money which he left in my charge until morning. Six weeks after this, I murdered two emigrants on their way from Montreal to New York. Finding that they had considerable money, as they inquired about the currency of English gold in the States, I inquired how much they had; they showed it to me, and I told them that it was generally too light. I then put them to sleep in a room adapted for such persons, and in the night we entered by means of a slide door which was for the purpose, where we found them asleep. Each of us were armed, but we found no resistance; we soon committed them to eternity. Their bodies we buried in the wood-house, and found £400, in gold, in their bed; we then divided the spoil. Their names I never knew. And, last of all, I assisted to murder Morse, the Quaker, from New York, while boarding at my house. I am guilty of ten deliberate murders with my own hands, and accessory to many more. I will not confess any more, for I do not, nor cannot expect forgiveness; for I already feel the wrath of an avenging God searing my soul,—for my crimes are too black, my deeds too heinous, to expect to reign in happiness with those innocent beings that I caused to leave the world by my cruel treachery; the tears of the bereaved widows, and the cries of the helpless orphans, will speak with tongues of indignation against me.

She here made another attempt to rise, but in vain. She then laid down for a little time quite still and motionless, but was again seized with another fit of despair. Placing her eyes fast on the object of her contemplation, in the most terrific and agonizing cries, she exclaimed, that she now "felt the pains of hell searing her very soul!"

The surgeon now came in and assisted to support her. For some time she remained in a most exquisite anguish, until she at length sunk back on her pillow, weak and exhausted, and her immortal spirit winged its way, to appear before its eternal Judge, there to answer for the deeds committed in the body, and we hope will, or has, found more favor and mercy, than she did from the human tribunal, which sentenced her to die, according to the civil law, which I hope will still continue to be rightly and justly administered, because on its administration depends our safety and happiness, as well as civil and religious liberties.

Her death was truly heart-rending and awful, and should serve as a warning to all those who read this account, to be prepared to meet their eternal Judge, to render such an account of their past lives as may stand the testion that great day, when each and every one of us shall have the book of life unfolded, either to our everlasting happiness, or eternal damnation. When we reflect how awful must be the afflictions of the guilty sinner in the last and terrible moments, when, finding their earthly career of misspent time about to close on them for ever, what pride would they then give for a new life, or the opportunity which was so abused; what would then signify the paltry, ill-gotten treasure, which was obtained at the expense of the widow and the cries of the helpless orphan, or at the expense of the life and blood of their fellow being, and, last of all, at the loss of their happiness here, and their immortal souls hereafter.

The ill-fated and long to be remember Sophia Hamilton breathed her last on the evening of the 15 h of April 1845. Thus terminated the cruel, atrocious, and blood-thirsty career of father, son and daughter. And now, gentle reader, you may contemplate over this melancholy field of human wickedness, which, I venture to say, stands unparalleled in the annals of crime; for true it is, that as man lives, he generally dies, as we find Brown did, who was mentioned in the foregoing pages, and whose career ceased with hers; therefore it is to be sincesely hoped that the exposure of the lives of those atrocious beings may be a timely lesson, to those who may read this; that all may learn to avoid a wicked, regardless course of life in youth, lest it might grow up to maturity, and cease only with their mortal career. When we behold the hardened and regardless sinner, who perhaps mocks at the idea of practical religion, as well as the boasting, disdain-

ful infidel, who not only mocks, but tramples on the holy ordinances of religion, prostrate on the couch of death, then you will find a contradiction of his previously professed principles. Even the celebrated Paine, who flung the sacred volume to the wind, how did he feel on the matter, during the close of his earthly campaign. He died like Judas, afflicted with the bitter gall of remorse and sorrow, but not with true repentance. Therefore, we should try to live as we would wish to die, or at least with a conscience as free from moral guilt as possible, in order to render our last moments happy.

In giving to the public an abridgement of the life of this atrociously wicked woman, we hope that our numerous readers, either moral or immoral, will never need such a lesson as that already detailed; but it may be truly looked upon as one of the most astonishing circumstances of the age, in the midst of civilization and morality. Were we to attempt to give even an outline of the melancholy and sad looking scene which the trial presented, it would, we fear, fill the minds of our gentle and tender-hearted readers with horror; but we have endeavored as much as possible to avoid the darker and more disagreeable portion of the cruelty with which this vile creature was charged. We assure you, reader, that we entertain too much respect for the feelings, as well as the moral effect which the exposure of such crimes might have on the weaker minds, and we therefore consider it a duty we owe to the public to lay before the world the foregoing pages.

As regards the truth of the foregoing, we presume the greater portion of our readers throughout the Province and the United States have already seen an outline, if not a detail of her trial, through the columns of their numerous journals, and consequently we were induced to search after and find out a well authenticated account of her parentage, of which we gave an abridged account in the foregoing pages, hoping that it will not be doubted by any incredulous of the truth or authenticity of this narrative. If they will find a Fredericton or St. Johns journal of the middle or latter part of April their doubts will be satisfied. We hope the public will feel satisfied with the account here given, as we were prompted by no other view than that of preserving the honest fame of those who enjoy a moral reputation, and to secure a peace of mind to those who are yet unconscious of offence, as it is well known, to the misfortune of many, that an artful mind, actuated by illusion if not checked in youth, may pass on to acts of fraud and violence, and in some instances to deliberate and cold-blooded murder; as it appears that even the tenderness of the female sex, of which the foregoing pages furnish an example, is converted into the barbarity of the traitor, that she who should make her arm a pillow for

the head of her husband, conspired to raise it against his life, that the bosom which should be filled with fidelity and affection, planned his destruction. Hence, as has been observed by the author, it is his sincere hope, in sending this narrative abroad, that it may be the means of saving some misguided youth from similar offence as there are many in the moral retirement of village life, little conscious of the wickedness and depravity of the world. They too often advance on the journey of life without caution; a road which every youth should walk with the vigilance of an experienced mariner, who watches the uncertain clouds in order to prepare for season for a coming storm, which, if the ill-fated subjects of this narrative had done in early life, they would have avoided their unhappy lives, and untimely and disgraceful end.

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